REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1, 2, 4, 8, 9, and 11 have been cancelled in favor of new Claims 12-21. Of these, Claims 12, 13, 14, 16, 19, and 21 parallel the cancelled Claims 1, 2, 4, 11, 8, and 9. All new claims recite "lipophilic layer" instead of "oleophlic layer" to be consistent with the original disclosure although both terms can mean essentially the same property in lithography.

New Claims 15, 17, 18, and 20 are described in the original disclosure as follows:

Claim 15: pages 11 (lines 18-20) and 12 (lines 18-20);

Claim 17: page 14 (lines 15-17);

Claim 18: page 15 (lines 6-9); and

Claim 20: page 18 (lines 3-5).

Thus, the present amendment is supported in the original specification.

Applicant respectfully submits that all rejections of this application should be withdrawn for the reasons presented below particularly in view of new Claims 12-21.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. §102(b)

Claims 1, 2, 4, 8, 9 and 11 have been rejected as anticipated by US Patent 5,908,731 (Leenders et al.). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

The Office Action argues that Leenders et al describes a lithographic printing plate precursor containing a crosslinked product having a polymer with a heat decomposable group and a crosslinking agent. It also argues that the various features of dependent Claims 2, 4, 8, 9, and 11 are described by Leenders et al.

On pages 3-4 of the Office Action, the Examiner argues that Applicant's claims are anticipated because the features relied upon are not in the rejected claims, even though they are in the specification. It is believed that Applicant's new claims presented with this response overcome these concerns.

Applicant's invention is directed to a lithographic printing plate precursor having an oleophilic layer containing an already crosslinked product that is a crosslinked polymer having heat decomposable groups. This polymer

has already been crosslinked with a crosslinking agent and it still has unreacted heat decomposable groups. The polymer can be crosslinked during or immediately after coating, but it is not crosslinked during imaging. Thus, it is already crosslinked when the precursor is imaged, and there are unreacted heat decomposable groups still in the polymer that are needed at the time of imaging. As pointed out on page 4 (lines 16ff) of the present application, the "lipophilic layer comprises a cross-linked product (*emphasis added*) obtained by cross-linking a polymer having a thermally decomposable group on the main chain, with a cross-linker". In addition, Applicant teaches on page 10 (lines 19ff) of the present application that crosslinking of the polymer occurs "under drying heat" after coating and prior to imaging. This is demonstrated in Example 1 (page 24, lines 4-7). If the polymer did not still contain heat decomposable groups, imaging would not be possible because these groups facilitate ablative removal of the imaged or exposed regions. Imaging is not used to crosslink the polymer in the lipophilic layer. It is already crosslinked.

The rejection of Applicant's claimed invention is based on the teaching of a crosslinked hydrophobic layer in the element described in Col. 2 (lines 24-31 and 57ff). This crosslinkable layer is prepared using crosslinkable monomers with various reactive groups (Col. 3, lines 1-42). The resulting crosslinked polymer in the hydrophobic layer is then used in the imageable element to reduce debris released into the atmosphere during imaging.

Contrary to the inference in the Office Action, the crosslinked polymer described in Leenders et al. does not contain heat decomposable groups. If such groups once existed in the hydrophobic layer composition, they were used to crosslink it. For example, azo groups (Col. 5, lines 1-2) are mentioned for producing radicals for polymerization or crosslinking of the polymer or monomer reactants. Thus, the crosslinked layer in Leenders et al. is prepared using any of many conventional crosslinkable components and crosslinking agents, but the resulting product is not described as having heat decomposable groups still in the crosslinked network, as in the oleophilic layer used in the presently claimed invention. Even the acid precursors mentioned in Col. 6 of Leenders et al. are substantially decomposed when the crosslinking is carried out. There is no indication, explicit or implicit, that the resulting crosslinked polymers have heat decomposable groups that participate in imaging as in the presently claimed

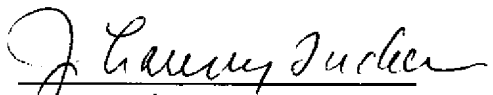
invention. Moreover, imaging of the element described in Leenders et al. occurs by ablating the metallic layer underneath the hydrophobic layer (Col. 2, lines 24-28). Thus, the hydrophobic layer of Leenders et al. has nothing to so with imaging. It is used for debris-control.

In response to the comments on pages 3-4 of the Office Action, Applicant's new Claims 12-21 better describe the presence of the heat-decomposable groups in the already-crosslinked product.

For these reasons, Leenders et al. does not anticipate the presently claimed invention and the rejection under Section 102(b) should be withdrawn.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, reconsideration of this patent application is respectfully requested. A prompt and favorable action by the examiner is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,



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